

George Riddell of Rosehearty: fiddler and collector

Katherine Campbell

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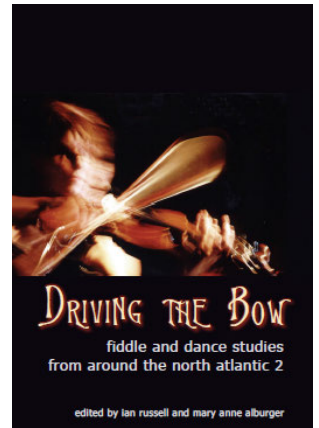
Driving the Bow

Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 2

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George Riddell of Rosehearty: fiddler and collector

KATHERINE CAMPBELL

George Riddell was a gifted fiddler who saw some of the material he collected making its way into print during his lifetime, and who also contributed a substantial number of tunes to Gavin Greig, which have now been published across the eight volumes of *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1981-2002). Riddell had many aspects to his musical life, as highlighted in Mary Anne Alburger's article about him, where he is paired with James Scott Skinner.² Alburger notes that Riddell arranged two tunes for James Scott Skinner's publication, *The Harp and Claymore*,³ and

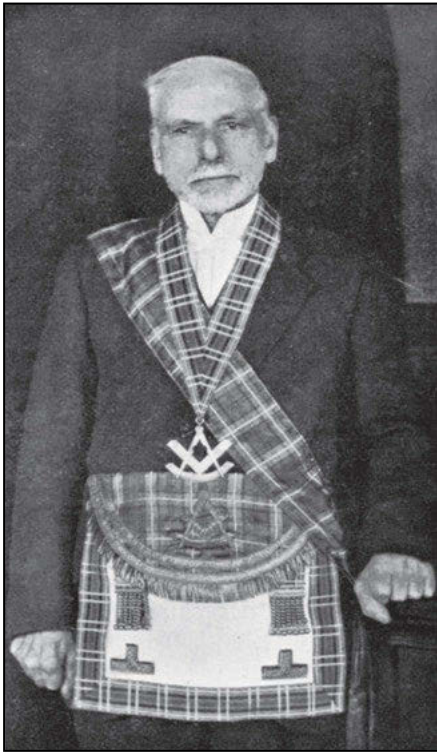


Figure 1 George Riddell¹

his obituary states: 'In 1890 he was successful in setting a song of Professor Blackie's to music out of 170 competitors. He composed the melody and piano accompaniment'.⁴ Alburger believes that he may also have been the author of an article on 'Cremona Violins and Violin Makers' that appeared in the *People's Friend* in 1890.⁵ Despite his many musical achievements, he does not appear to have had a formal training in music, since his obituary shows that as a 'shepherd lad' he 'spent hours lying on the grass trying to discover for himself which notes formed the many tunes he knew by ear'.⁶

In this article I will focus on Riddell's collecting from tradition, taking as my base his two manuscript books entitled 'Old Airs'⁷ and the series of articles published in the *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*,⁸ supplemented by material from the script of his lecture on 'Folk-Song' which has remained in manuscript.⁹ In so doing, I hope to give a sense of the kinds of tunes he collected and

his responses to them, of his sources, and of his total output as it is currently known.¹⁰ In the Appendix, I give the titles of all the tunes in 'Old Airs', plus corresponding and additional items in Greig-Duncan and *Rymour*.¹¹

Riddell lived in the burgh of Rosehearty which lies just west of the town of Fraserburgh on the Moray Firth coastline of North-East Scotland. He was born in Pitsligo parish on 9 January 1853, and died in Rosehearty in 1942 at the age of 89. Married to Margaret Lorimer, the couple had a daughter, Christian, and a son, Scott.¹² Like his father, also George, he was a shoemaker, and was one of the seven boot and shoe makers found in Rosehearty at a time when a wide array of trades existed to support the thriving fishing industry, which fell into decline in 1884 as a result of the 'devastating results of the herring fishing [...] that turned Rosehearty into a ghost town overnight'.¹³ It is striking that none of the people from whom Riddell heard or collected songs, so far as he identifies them, had any connection with fishing, with the exception of 'Auld Jeck', a cooper, and possibly also his unidentified source for 'The New-Tarr'd Yoll'.¹⁴ The repertoire Riddell draws on is that of the rural community, and the changes that he has witnessed in this society form a strong theme in his writings.

Riddell's two manuscript books of 'Old Airs' begun in 1903 and now held in the National Library of Scotland,¹⁵ contain an impressive 108 tunes, of which seventy-one appear in *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*. Sixty-four of them were sent to Greig in 1905 and the rest in 1907 and 1908.¹⁶ Greig mentions Riddell and his collection in his letter to Duncan of 11 November 1905:

Mr Geo. Riddell, Rosehearty, has sent me his MS. Collection to copy – 64 airs in all. He has not done any hunting as yet. Things have come to him he says without searching. Riddell is a very good musician – fiddler & theorist, and can compose *wonderfully* well. He knows what he is about, and his versions of tunes can be trusted. Some of his tunes are old friends – with as usual somewhat new faces. Some are new to me; and some like 'House o' Airlie' and 'Dowie Dens o' Yarrow' are interesting versions of well-known melodies. Unfortunately for us he has not secured the words along with the airs. (In one or two cases he gives a verse to show how the words fit the notes).¹⁷

In terms of his focus on the tunes as opposed to the words, Riddell links with the collecting efforts of Dean William Christie.¹⁸ But it is interesting that nowhere among his writings does he mention Christie: one must conclude that either he did not have access to Christie's volumes, which were expensive in their day, or perhaps that he did not value the work that Christie had undertaken.

Riddell was of the belief that previous collectors had not paid nearly enough attention to the tunes, saying:

It is matter for regret that, at the same time when much was being done to gather in the old ballads, no similar effort was made to preserve the airs to which they were sung. As a consequence of this neglect, many gems of melody must have

perished. In country districts, where alone they continued to linger, the airs gradually got separated from the original words, and became associated with others whose only claim to consideration consists in their having been the means of preserving melodies that would otherwise have been lost.¹⁹

Despite his close connection with Greig, Riddell was scornful of the words of some of the songs that Greig was collecting, and argued for the need for words that matched the quality of the tunes.

Mr. Greig says that it is unfair to judge words and music separately, that a song is to be judged only by hearing it sung. Well, my own idea is that the union of words and music is like marriage. If there be not a certain affinity between the two, the union is incongruous and ought never to have taken place. When music and poetry are joined, the one should form the complement of the other, and each when taken alone should have something to recommend it. Even the very finest music will fail to hallow ribaldry, dignify doggerel, or give substance to inanity.²⁰

His views on the 'marriage' of words and tunes are interesting, and link with the need for a fusion of music and words to be present in a successful song.²¹

Although Riddell gives relatively few words from his own memory, the material he does supply includes a few interesting scraps that show him being aware of very local song traditions. One of these is the title of no. 31 'From the Seatown to the Newtown'. This song, Greig-Duncan 463 'The Masons', generally includes wording like 'From the city to the new toon' but the wording of Riddell's title refers to the perceived division in Rosehearty between the fishertown and the other part of it. In 'Folk-Song', Riddell speaks of localised songs and gives two brief instances which refer to places in his neighbourhood.²² The first can be related to Greig-Duncan 84 'The Bonnie Lass o' Fyvie', and the second bears some resemblance to Greig-Duncan 85 'The Brisk Young Rover'. It is interesting to find that a verse of Greig-Duncan 84 that is given along with the music by John Mowat of New Pitsligo (version S) has the place-names 'Aberdour', 'Boyndlie', and 'Tyrie' like Riddell's verse:

[P]atriotism in its wide sense finds no expression, the folk-songist's sentiments in this respect being intensely local, and usually inspired by love incidents connected with particular localities. For instance:

'Green grows the girse at bonnie Aiberdour
An' low lies the bonnie lands o' Boyndlie.
How I will sigh an' say when I'm mony miles away –
"I ance had a sweetheart in Tyrie".'

And again –

'The tears they fall and blind me,

When I look back to bonnie Bodychell,
And the bonnie lassie I left behind me.'

'Bodychell', an area outside Memsie, a few miles inland from Rosehearty and Fraserburgh, occurs also in the only piece of family tradition that Riddell mentions. He comments on 'Johnnie Sangster':

The air to which Johnnie Sangster is sung is an old reel tune known as 'Johnnie Lad'. A respected ancestor of my own I understand, used the same tune to a song of which this is one verse:—

'They tied her mou' intil a rape,
Her neck intil a cell,
An' ye wid'a' heard the groans o' her,
At th' dams o' Bodychell.'

I have failed to recover any more of the song or to find out what it refers to.²³

Riddell gives few sources for his material in 'Old Airs', most probably because many of the tunes were held in his own memory, but he does name three people. No. 100 is an 'Air contributed by A. Murison, Rosehearty' who is likely to be Alexander Murison, author of the book *Rosehearty Rhymes and other Pieces*,²⁴ and no. 103, 'Old Highland Air', was communicated by James Watt Duthie. No. 107 'Loch Lomond', has a 'refrain' which is 'given as it was played by J. Scott Skinner. Its origin is uncertain.' It seems likely that some light can be shed on the matter of the refrain's origin, since the note to 'Loch Lomond' 1528C in Greig-Duncan states: 'A second strain communicated by Mr J. Scott Skinner as got from Mr McHardy "Laird o' Drumblair"²⁵ who says he got it from a farmer in the Auchterless district.' The refrain in Greig-Duncan is similar to the one given here.

Loch Lomond.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the tune 'Loch Lomond'. It consists of five staves of music in G major, 2/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first line of music is: 'By ye bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond, where the sun shines bright on Loch -'. The second line: 'Lo - mond, where we and my true love were wont to goe, on the bonnie,'. The third line: 'bonnie banks o' Loch - lo - mond. (Refrain.)'. The fourth line: 'I'll be in Scot-land a - fore ye; tak me on my true love will'. The fifth line: 'never meet a - gain, on the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch - lo - mond.'

Figure 2 'Loch Lomond' from 'Old Airs'²⁶

Besides these named individuals, Riddell identifies another source in 'Old Airs' saying that no. 86, 'O, Wha's for Scotland and Charlie?', was 'taken down from the singing of a travelling book(?) deliverer who had been a precentor in his day'. Another song that has a link with a precentor is no. 11, 'Mossie and his mare'. Riddell comments: 'the tune is a dainty strathspey in the Dorian mode, finely adapted for bringing out the humour of the song', which, he says, was very popular when he was young and was a special favourite of 'a precentor of Pitsligo church well on to a hundred years ago'.²⁷ Riddell gives this kind of reference on a number of occasions, and this enables us to build up a picture of the contexts in which he heard the music that he made a note of, sometimes at a much later date.

Rymour Articles

Riddell contributed a series of five brief articles to *Rymour*, containing twenty-two tunes, and had a close relationship with the society: 'In Edinburgh [...] there is a society called The Rymour Club – of which I have the honour to be a corresponding member – which numbers among its objects the collecting and printing of Folksong, both words and music'.²⁸ I have numbered the articles from 1–5 for convenience.

1. 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with an Introduction and Notes'

After sending the first 64 tunes in 'Old Airs' to Greig, Riddell then used the next six tunes for his first article. His first tune is 'The Rigs o' Rye', and he notes that this song has another air 'a copy of which I have supplied for another work'. This is no. 1054J in Greig-Duncan, and he comments that it 'consists of four phrases only, and is in other respects inferior to that here given'. The tune in *Rymour* is different from that commonly used for the song, and is included here as Figure 3.



Figure 3 'The Rigs o' Rye'²⁹

His second tune, 'If She will Gang wi' Ye', is 'a quaint and beautiful example of the Dorian mode, and has more real pathos in it than dozens of latter-day "compositions"'. Concerning his collecting of it, Riddell says:

The individual to whom I am indebted for it knew nothing of the words beyond the title here given. Although the air has only recently been recovered by me, I have a distinct recollection of hearing it in my youth, sung to words with this burden –

She's aye been my ruin,
And my sad downfall,
She's my heart enclosed
Like a stone in lime wall.³⁰

The refrain Riddell remembered is that of the song that occurs in the Greig-Duncan collection as 1216 'Stone and Lime', and the majority of the tunes given there resemble this one.

About 'Donald and his Lowland Bride' he notes that 'I have never met with a copy of the melody, and have known only one person who sang it, and he has long since passed into the silent land. The air is quite modern, and might be made much of by an effective singer'.³¹ He continues with a discussion of 'The New-Tarr'd Yoll (Yawl)', stating that it was:

common in its own district [Buchanhaven, a fishing village near Peterhead] between 40 and 50 years ago. I can well recall the enthusiasm with which the air was regarded by a musical and literary friend whose voice will be heard no more.³²

This is an interesting song, since his obituary states that, under the influence of his musical friend, who was Sir Harold Boulton, he wrote 'new words for the old folk song "The Tarrin' o' the Yoll"'.³³ These words do not appear in *Rymour* or in 'Old Airs', however, where the following traditional ones are given:

There's nae a yoll like oor yoll, oor yoll, oor yoll;
There's nae a yoll like oor yoll, in a' oor toon:
Dadee eedin ood dood, ood dood, ood dood;
Dadee eedin ood dood, the new tarr'd yoll!³⁴

There is a pastoral emphasis in connection with his final two tunes, 'Irish Molly, O' and 'O, Laddie, are ye Waiting?'. Riddell notes that both were 'favourites in the country districts of Buchan when I was young, and to me they will ever be reminiscent of sweet-scented fields in the summer gloaming, and rosy-cheeked maidens that carry the milking-pail'.³⁵

2. 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with Notes'

In his second article, Riddell gives four tunes (76, 78, 79, 81) from 'Old Airs' as well as two that do not appear in the manuscript. The first, 'The Braes o' Strathdon', he notes 'is one of the finest of our folk-tunes. Although abounding in bold intervals, it is somewhat plaintive in character, a feature it owes to the pentatonic scale. Its cadences are striking, and the arrangement of its two lines of melody certainly makes the most of very slender material.'³⁶ His next example is the only instance given in *Rymour* of collecting from a fiddler, but it is a striking one:

'Bonnie Mary Jamieson' is never heard nowadays, although it was popular in rural districts fifty years ago. I have vivid recollections of a fiddler with whom it was a great favourite. His wife bore the same name as the heroine of the song, and in the courting days, when he wished to make his presence known, he usually did so by whistling a few bars of 'Mary Jamieson'. As a fiddler, Forbes, as he was called, was more noted for vigour than artistic excellence. In early life he had the misfortune to lose part of one of the fingers of his left hand; but this, instead of damping his ardour for violin-playing, only added to his conceit. When wonder was expressed how he managed to play, the invariable reply was, 'Ow, I jist need t' apply th' bow gey weel'.³⁷

A similar story is found in connection with James Scott Skinner's father, who reversed the way in which he played the fiddle following an injury to his left hand.

Riddell notes that his third tune, 'The Band o' Shearers', was picked up in his youth and from his comment we have a sense that he can actually visualise the singer:

Of one harvest song in particular, I have very pleasant recollections. It used to be sung by the finest singer of folk-songs I have ever heard, and at times even yet, I can almost imagine I hear his full round voice as he rolled out the cheery refrain –

Bonnie lassie will ye gang
And shear wi' me the hale day lang?
And love will cheer us as we gang
To join yon band o' shearers.³⁸

Riddell adds in *Rymour* 'With the coming of the reaping machine, I am afraid the last vestige of romance has disappeared from the harvest-field.' He mentions changes in society also in connection with no. 5, 'To Gang Awa' A-wooin'', which was one of his 'recent acquisitions': 'It was taken down from the singing of one who, in days gone by, used to delight his compeers around the farm kitchen fire with his rendering of rural folk-song. Such a thing is scarcely to be heard nowadays. Our peasantry don't sing; and more is the pity'.³⁹ Riddell continues: 'My singer rendered it approx in 2-4 time; but after full consideration, and for reasons which need not be specified,

I have written it in 6-8.' Riddell clearly had a high level of musical ability, and was able to transcribe melodies and adapt them if necessary; but this is an exceptional case since he is generally aiming at authenticity in his notation of tunes. About no. 6, 'A Nameless Air', he writes: 'To this air I am not able to give even a name. Long ago I have heard it sung to a ballad regarding which a highwayman, a little boy, and a cow are mixed together in my memory. I have tried hard, without success, to recover a verse of the ballad'.⁴⁰ This song takes the generic title of 'The Yorkshire Farmer' in Greig-Duncan (266), with the title often given by singers as 'The Boy and the Cow'. The remaining item in this article, no. 4, 'Come, All Ye Freemasons', is discussed below.

3. 'Two Ancient Highland Airs'

Riddell here drew on a tune from 'Old Airs', no. 7, 'The Fisherman Boy', plus an air that he did not include in that manuscript: 'When I am on the Sea Sailing'. He writes:

'The Fisherman Boy' has an individuality of its own, and is undoubtedly one of the finest of our folk melodies. Time was when its pleasing strains might have been heard about any farm-toun; but now, unfortunately, the old-time minstrelsy, with its deep pathos and marvellous sincerity, has given place to the banalities of the music-hall.

Its words run:

High in the Hielands a poor boy did wander,
And low in the Lowlands a poor boy did roam.
'Oh, here am I a stranger expos'd to ev'ry danger,
A poor little wee fisherman boy so far away from home.'⁴¹

'When I am on the Sea Sailing' was one of the three tunes he employed to illustrate modes in his lecture. He notes that this tune 'exemplifies the pathos and tender beauty of many of these old Dorians'. He gave as another instance of the Dorian mode in sol-fa notation, an unnamed air that he collected directly from an informant and was unable 'to associate with words of any sort'. He says: 'It was picked up by a Fraserburgh man in the lower Buchan district more than twenty years ago, and taken down by me from his singing. I look on it as a marvel of quaintness and vague tonality.'⁴² He was later able to identify this tune, however: no. 21 in 'Old Airs' originally had the statement 'Name unknown' above it, but this was scored out and the title 'Glasgow Peggy' inserted along with a verse of the words.

His third illustration was an Aeolian example, 'O, Charlie, O, Charlie come ower fae Pitgair'. This was not in the true Aeolian mode, however, since the sixth note of the scale is not present.⁴³ Like other scholars of that period – including Greig and Duncan and many of those involved in the English folk song revival – Riddell was interested in assigning a mode to a folk tune, and it may be noted that Duncan

also included illustrations of modes in the lecture he gave to the Aberdeen Wagner Society.⁴⁴ In Duncan's case the illustrations were sung, but Riddell had the airs played 'without accompaniment';⁴⁵ most likely by himself on the fiddle.

4. 'Three Unpublished Airs'

Here he selected the very first two tunes in 'Old Airs', 'The Foggy Dew' and 'Pretty Peggy', plus no. 74 'I Will Put my Ship in Order'. It is likely that, not having had these early tunes published by Greig as he expected, he took the decision to publish them in *Rymour*. He reflects on their choice:

It is now a good many years since I first committed to writing 'The Foggy Dew' and 'Pretty Peggy'. For a long time both were, and indeed to some extent still are, popular in northern rural districts. Both may be classed as love-songs, although neither is exactly of the kind considered suitable for a drawing-room. The music, however, might be sung in church without any offence to the feelings of the most devout worshipper. It will be observed that both airs have a second strain – not a very common thing in folk-melodies.⁴⁶

About 'I Will Put my Ship in Order', he notes:

To those unacquainted with the peculiarities of the mixolydian mode, [...] [the song] may appear a marvel of quaintness; but probably on this very account that mode seems to have a peculiar attraction for the singer of folk-songs. He alone seems to be able to do it full justice. The example here given was learned long ago from the singing of a servant-girl belonging to Banffshire. She believed that the crooning of this particular air acted as a powerful charm in making the cows yield their milk. The present writer asks no reward for making this information public.⁴⁷

5. 'Five Old Airs, with Notes'

In his final article he includes three tunes from 'Old Airs' (58, 59, 62), which were used for the Masons' Walk (discussed below), plus two tunes that appear near the beginning of 'Old Airs' (8, 12), which are treated here. He notes that the air of 'Hame, Dearie, Hame' has a delightful "lilt" about it, and was for long very popular in the North', continuing:

A year ago the present writer, for the purpose of illustrating a lecture on folk-song, arranged it and one or two others as vocal quartets, when the reception accorded to this one especially, proved that the auld sangs – 'the sangs our mothers sang' – when properly rendered, had not lost their power to charm.⁴⁸

This song and no. 4, 'The Gloamin' Star', were sung as quartets in illustration of his 'Folk-Song' lecture. Riddell had eventually managed to locate the words of 'The Gloamin' Star', the tune of which had been a favourite of his for many years:

The song is inseparably associated in my mind with a certain Yule Nicht, when I, a very small boy, listened to its being sung by a fresh female voice, for the delectation of a company met to celebrate the time honoured festival of Sowens Nicht. It was the first occasion on which I had heard the song and I do not suppose that at the time my critical faculties had been very highly developed. At any rate, I listened with very great delight.⁴⁹

About 'A Sailor and his True Love' Riddell writes:

No songs are more popular with the folk-singer than those relating to sailors or the sea, though such songs do not bulk largely in his repertoire. The present one, with its fine jocund melody, I have heard lilted in the farm kitchen, sung at the harvest feast, and whistled behind the plough; but that was in days gone by!⁵⁰

The Masons' Walk

In Riddell's final article in *Rymour*, three tunes are given from an informant about whom we know a fair amount: 'Auld Jeck' of Rosehearty, whose real name was John Ritchie. Ritchie was a cooper in Rosehearty, who was born in 1809.⁵¹ He married Catherine Scott, and the couple had a son, Alexander, and a daughter, Mary. He died in 1878 aged 69.⁵² Riddell was particularly taken with him, and points to the fact that much of his material is not found in print. His note states:

'Duke Willie', 'Colonel Hay', and 'Drumdelgie' are given here just as they used to be performed by a remarkable old fife-player named John Ritchie, who belonged to Rosehearty, and died there many years ago. Few of his tunes are to be found in printed collections, and those given here, although written from memory, may be accepted as faithful reproductions. His playing of these and other tunes had a snap and verve which I have rarely heard equalled.⁵³

He does not mention the context of the performance of this material in *Rymour*, but a note in Greig's music manuscript describes it and provides a further four tunes. The note to the tunes from Ritchie states:

The following airs were learned by the writer in early youth, from the playing of an old man, who rendered them with great spirit on the fife. For many years 'Auld Jeck' supplied music for what has always been the greatest pageant in the world to the youth of this district – The Rosehearty Mason's Walk, which from time immemorial has taken place at Auld Yule.⁵⁴ The writer has never happened to see any of the airs in print and has reproduced them exactly as they were played by 'Auld Jeck'.⁵⁵

Riddell mentions Jeck in another a letter he wrote to Duncan on 23 November 1914:

It was only on these occasions that I or any one else have heard him play. The night previous to the 'walk' he used to take down his fife from the shelf where it had lain the whole year, and having oiled it, laid it down in readiness for the morrow, without playing a note. The 'walk' was the only occasion on which he played. I picked up the tunes from him when I was a boy.⁵⁶

If Riddell had been a boy of about twelve when he heard Auld Jeck, this would have been c. 1865, when Jeck would have been around fifty-six, suggesting that he looked older than he actually was.

The airs that have been reproduced here are taken from *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* where the music is given in facsimile.⁵⁷ I have followed the order in which they appear in Greig's manuscript, with the exception of the last two where the order has been reversed, and have included any notes given by Riddell. The tunes are significant for several reasons:

1. They were used to accompany this important local ritual which still exists at the present day but is now accompanied by a pipe band.
2. They allow us to access part of the repertoire of an individual tradition bearer (about whom we now know a considerable amount).
3. They are closely connected to Freemasonry, which is particularly strong in Scotland, and often employed traditional music and song in social evenings and other customary events. This is a theme I plan to explore in detail elsewhere.

Where possible, I have included a comparison of Ritchie's tunes with the others found in Greig-Duncan. I have given a verse (or more) of words in the case of all the tunes to illustrate the point that Riddell was operating in a shared musical environment and that his collecting of instrumental tunes was inextricably linked with his collecting of song. Riddell only includes words in the case of 'Duke Willie' and 'Drumdelgie'.

The first two tunes have military connections, and it is unsurprising to find them being used for a march or procession.



Figure 4 'Colonel Hay'

I can say nothing regarding the origin of 'Colonel Hay.' It is certainly reminiscent of 'Miss Forbes' Farewell to Banff,' but is, to my mind, the better air of the two.⁵⁸

For Colonel Hay's a nice young man
He walks the streets both neat and clean;
And gin ye gang wi' Colonel Hay,
Ye're sure to go wi' a gentleman.⁵⁹



Figure 5 'Duke Willie'

O mony a day hae I followed Duke Willie
And mony a day hae I followed the drum;
.....
.....
I've followed Duke Willie and lost all my money,
And now when I want it I canna win hame.⁶⁰

The dotted rhythms in bars 1 and 3 reflect the word 'mony' in the text. The tune and a fragment of the words to 'Duke Willie' were also noted from P. R. Gordon by Greig, with the comment, 'Often sung in fairs and feeing markets,'⁶¹ providing us with further information about the circumstances in which the item would have been heard. This was a folksong common to the public domain, possibly sold in broadside ballad form by ballad singers at markets. Gordon's tune differs somewhat from Riddell's and does not contain the Scots snaps.



Figure 6 'The Lass o' Glenshee'

This is a very well-known song, and thirteen versions of it appear in Greig-Duncan. It is probable that the Masons would have had the words of the song going on in their minds when involved in the procession, as would the bystanders. The version from Mrs Clark, collected by Greig, begins:

Ae bonnie day when the heather was bloomin'
The silent hill humming wi' the sair laden bee
I spied a fair maid as I homeward was riding
A-herding the sheep on the Hill o' Glenshee.⁶²



Figure 7 'Supple Sandy'

There are no further versions of this song in Greig-Duncan, but words were recorded for the tune in Shetland by Peter Cooke, where H. Cumming recalled the following:

For the note it was wrought [?]
And the guinea it was [sent?]
So I'd rather have the guinea than the one pound note.⁶³



Figure 8 'Drumdelgie'

'Drumdelgie' is one of the best known bothy ballads of North-East Scotland, and John Ritchie supplies the two-part tune that is most commonly sung nowadays to it.⁶⁴ He is unique in this respect in terms of the others found in the Greig-Duncan

collection.⁶⁵ Riddell writes in *Rymour*: 'After considering a number of points which need not be set down here, I am of the opinion that both 'Duke Willie' and 'Drumdelgie' have always had *two* strains as here given, although the folk-singer has, as usual, found *one* to be quite enough for his purpose'.⁶⁶ 'Strains' refer to parts of tunes – the first normally starting off in the lower register and the second moving to a higher one, as we would typically expect in an instrumental tune. This comment has associations with the work of Dean William Christie who felt that one strain alone was not enough, and frequently added a second one in his song collection *Traditional Ballad Airs*.

Linking with his statement above, Riddell gave words for only the first part of the tune.

O ken ye o' Drumdelgie's toon,
Where a' the crack lads go?
Stra'bogie braw, in a' her boun's,
A bigger canna show etc.⁶⁷



Figure 9 'Hey Jenny, Come Down to Jock'

This is the only version in the Greig-Duncan collection; but there is a version in the *Scots Musical Museum*, with the lyrics:

Jocky he came here to woo,
On ae feast-day when we were fu;
And Jenny pat on her best array;
When she heard that Jocky was come that way.⁶⁸

The tune is different from Riddell's, although there are similarities in the second strain in terms of the running quavers.

CAMPBELL *George Riddell of Rosehearty: fiddler and collector*



Figure 10 'I Kissed my Love wi' his Apron On'⁶⁹

It is not surprising to find a tune linked to Freemasonry being used for the Masons' Walk. The words of the version collected by Gavin Greig from Maggie Watt, are:

When Adam in the Garden went along with his companion Eve,
A' the time of their innocence we cannot say how long they did live,
In the cool of the day he to her did say, Why did you break the great command?
She was never ashamed nor could she be blamed to kiss her love wi' her apron on.
Right fal-a-di-di, tal-al-a-di-di,
Right fal-al-fal-al-dil-iri.

Did you not hear the mason word? 'Twas whispered round the other night.
Silly toys doth us annoy, and puts us in the least affright.
The serpent in Eve as you may say with their black tricks and curious plans
They soon made Adam his folly to see. 'Twas then he clappit his apron on.

It's brethren dear I beg your leave till I do end this simple song,
Five hundred and two both just and true to this Mason Lodge it does belong.
There is five steps that you must learn before the jewels you do put on,
Our Master dear sits in his chair, bless him and his apron on.⁷⁰

Riddell's tune is one of four in the collection for this song, which is set in the Garden of Eden and relates to the story of the breaking of the great command by eating the forbidden fruit. Another Masonic song appeared in *Rymour* with the following note:

'Come, All Ye Freemasons.' This is a song which was known only to 'brothers of the mystic tie,' and to few even of them. I have heard it sung with great applause on high and memorable occasions; but my recollection of the words is of the haziest description. The very few who knew it have long since ascended to the Grand Lodge above, and it is only after infinite trouble that I have managed to give the first verse. Indeed, the seventh line is an interpolation of my own, done for the purpose of showing the run of the melody. The song, although of interest to members of the craft, was of no poetic merit; but I think the melody worthy of preservation.⁷¹

The text runs:

Come, all ye freemasons where'er ye be,
That e'er the Royal Arch did view,
By these few lines ye will understand
That some gey steps I hae gane through.
When first a pilgrim I became,
Intending for the Holy Land,
I wander'd forth in simple faith,
My sandals on and staff in hand.⁷²

Riddell has thus added in his own approximation of the text in the second-last line in order that he can present the tune in its entirety, and as we have already seen, tune preservation was central to him.

Conclusion

Riddell uses a romantic construct to describe his type of collecting, including lines from Wordsworth's 'Solitary Reaper' in his comment:

During my life I have had special opportunities of hearing these airs sung under the most favourable natural conditions, and can truly say that

The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more,

with the result that I have carefully and lovingly gathered and written down a great many airs.⁷³

He is passionate about the material he is working with, and regrets the impact that societal and cultural changes occurring in the North-East at that time are having on the conditions for song singing that he recalled from the past. Riddell is also particularly concerned about the encroachment of the music and song from the music hall. He was an advocate of the performance of the material he collected. Like Greig and Duncan, he knew that audiences of that period expected to hear the songs performed with harmony, and to that end he arranged the songs 'Hame, Dearie, Hame' and 'The Gloamin' Star' in order to illustrate his lecture.

In Riddell's final paragraph in 'Folk-Song' we can see his dedication to collecting. He makes an appeal for further tunes, believing that they are rapidly dying out:

For a long while now – in fact since before the subject had begun to attract attention – I have interested myself in the collecting and recording of these airs, and I have been the means of having a good many of them preserved in so far as print can do it. But this after all is merely a sort of embalm-ment. It will never lead to their being sung. The time for collecting them however is nearly

past. We live in strenuous and changeable times, and whether it be for good or evil, those who once delighted in them, have almost ceased to sing them. [...] And this brings me to the purpose of these concluding remarks. If any of you or your friends happen to be acquainted with any of the old airs, I should esteem it a great favour if you would kindly let me know; and then we might make arrangements for having them written down. A few more years and it will be too late.⁷⁴

Riddell has given us a localised community repertoire drawn from the Rosehearty district and has supplied us with a good deal of the context surrounding it, as in the case of the Masons' Walk. It is now up to modern-day fiddlers, instrumentalists, and singers with an interest in the past to bring this repertoire alive.

Notes

¹ George Riddell, *The Rise and Progress of Forbes Lodge of Freemasons, No. 67, Rosehearty, Aberdeenshire* (London: for the Lodge, printed by Roberts and Newton, [c.1929]), p. 2.

² Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, Emily B. Lyle, et al (eds), *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, 8 vols (Aberdeen and Edinburgh: Aberdeen University Press/Mercat Press for the University of Aberdeen in association with the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1981–2002). Songs from this collection are given the prefix GD.

³ Manuscript copies of these can be found on the University of Aberdeen's *The Music of James Scott Skinner* website, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/scottskinner/> (accessed 19 May 2008).

⁴ 'Obituary: Mr George Riddell' (clipping from an unidentified newspaper affixed to front cover of 'Old Airs'), book I, NLS MS 3042, p. 1.

⁵ Mary Anne Alburger, 'J. Scott Skinner and George Riddell', in Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, Emily B. Lyle, and Katherine Campbell (eds), *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (2002), VIII, 588–89 (p. 589).

⁶ 'Obituary: Mr George Riddell'.

⁷ George Riddell, 'Old Airs', books I and II, NLS MS3042 and MS3043, (n.d.).

⁸ George Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with an Introduction and Notes', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66; 'A Set of Six Old Airs, with Notes', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21; 'Two Ancient Highland Airs', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 2 (1912–1919), 36–37; 'Three Unpublished Airs', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 2 (1912–1919), 62–63; 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92.

⁹ University of Aberdeen, Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives, MS 3088/22. I am grateful for permission to quote from Riddell's 'Folk-Song' manuscript.

¹⁰ I would like to thank Dr Emily Lyle, University of Edinburgh, for her kind assistance with this article. I am also grateful to Dr Mary Anne Alburger, University of Aberdeen, for her encouragement.

¹¹ The titles in 'Old Airs' are as given in the body of manuscript, rather than in the index.

¹² OPR 1853/233/3; census record, 1901/223/002; and death record, 1942/233/28. He died on 22 May 1942 at 19 the Square, Rosehearty.

¹³ James Taylor, and Liz Taylor, *Aul Rosehearty Toon* (Fraserburgh: Visual Image Production, 1993), p. 23.

¹⁴ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 190.

¹⁵ National Library of Scotland, MS 3042 and MS 3043.

- ¹⁶ Emily Lyle, 'The Formation of the Collection', in Shuldham-Shaw, Lyle and Campbell (eds), *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (2002), VIII, 465–529 (pp. 465–66).
- ¹⁷ University of Aberdeen, Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives, MS 998/13/9. I am grateful for permission to quote from Greig's letter to Duncan, 11 November 1905.
- ¹⁸ William Christie, *Traditional Ballad Airs*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1876 and 1881).
- ¹⁹ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–11), 61–66 (p. 61).
- ²⁰ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 7.
- ²¹ See Henry Tompkins Kirby-Smith, *The Celestial Twins: Poetry and Music through the Ages* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).
- ²² University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 20–21.
- ²³ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 29a.
- ²⁴ Alexander Murison, *Rosehearted Rhymes and Other Pieces* (Banff, 1925).
- ²⁵ This was William McHardy, a benefactor of Skinner's. See Alburger, 'Skinner and Riddell', p. 601.
- ²⁶ I am grateful to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for permission to reproduce this tune.
- ²⁷ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 36.
- ²⁸ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 4–5.
- ²⁹ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–11), 61–66 (p. 62).
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–11), 61–66 (p. 64).
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ 'Obituary: Mr George Riddell'.
- ³⁴ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66 (p. 64).
- ³⁵ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66 (p. 66).
- ³⁶ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 116).
- ³⁷ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 117).
- ³⁸ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 26–27.
- ³⁹ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 119).
- ⁴⁰ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 120).
- ⁴¹ Riddell, 'Two Ancient Highland Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 36–37 (p. 36).
- ⁴² University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 11.
- ⁴³ Compare versions in Greig-Duncan 401 'Pitgair', where the mode is almost exclusively Aeolian/Dorian.
- ⁴⁴ Patrick Shuldham-Shaw and Emily Lyle, 'Folk-Song in the North-East: J. B. Duncan's Lecture to the Aberdeen Wagner Society, 1908', *Scottish Studies*, 18 (1974), 1–37.
- ⁴⁵ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 12.
- ⁴⁶ Riddell, 'Three Unpublished Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 62–63 (p. 62).
- ⁴⁷ Riddell, 'Three Unpublished Airs', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 62–63 (p. 63).
- ⁴⁸ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 118).
- ⁴⁹ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', p. 39. Riddell sent a copy of the words to Greig who published them; see Gavin Greig, *Folk-Song in Buchan and Folk-Song of the North-East by Gavin Greig*, with a foreword by Kenneth S. Goldstein and Arthur Argo (Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates, 1963), Ob.82.
- ⁵⁰ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 189).
- ⁵¹ OPR 1809/233/2; see <http://www.scotlandpeople.gov.uk/> (accessed 19 May 2008).

⁵² Death record, 1878/233/18; see <http://www.scotlandspople.gov.uk/> (accessed 19 May 2008).

⁵³ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 190).

⁵⁴ See Ian Russell, 'Flute Bands and their Annual Walks in North-East Scotland: Music, Tradition, and Community', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 15 (2002–3), 99–111, for a discussion of the annual yule walks held in the nearby settlements of Inverallochy, Cairnbulg, and St Combs which are accompanied by flute bands.

⁵⁵ 'Auld Jeck' is mentioned in the notes to song 471D in Shuldham-Shaw et al, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1987), III, 649. For a discussion of the Rosehearty Walk, see Katherine Campbell, 'The Masons' Walk at Rosehearty', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 20 (2008), 127–32.

⁵⁶ Lucy Broadwood, 'Songs from Scotland and the North Country', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, 5.2, no. 19 (1915), 104–121 (p. 105).

⁵⁷ I am grateful to the University of Aberdeen, Historic Collections, Special Libraries and Archives for permission to reproduce these musical examples.

⁵⁸ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 191).

⁵⁹ GD 75A, verse 1, collected from Mrs Greig by Duncan. See note to this song on the identity of 'Colonel Hay', Shuldham-Shaw et al, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1981), I, 515.

⁶⁰ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 192).

⁶¹ See GD 1763B note, in Shuldham-Shaw et al, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (2002), VIII, 407.

⁶² GD 953A, verse 1.

⁶³ University of Edinburgh, School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1970/257. See Peter Cooke, *The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 143. I am grateful to Dr Peter Cooke for drawing my attention to this text at the NAFCo Conference in Aberdeen, 27–29 July 2006.

⁶⁴ See Katherine Campbell, 'Exploring Christie's Musical Choices in *Traditional Ballad Airs*', in Proceedings of the 35th International Ballad Commission Conference, Kiev, Ukraine (forthcoming).

⁶⁵ See GD 384.

⁶⁶ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 191).

⁶⁷ Riddell, 'Five Old Airs, with Notes', *Rymour*, 2 (1912–1919), 188–92 (p. 192).

⁶⁸ James Johnson and Robert Burns, *The Scots Musical Museum 1787–1803*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: James Johnson); repr. edn in 2 vols, ed. by Donald A. Low (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), no. 167.

⁶⁹ GD 471D.

⁷⁰ GD 471A.

⁷¹ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 118).

⁷² Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 116–21 (p. 119).

⁷³ Riddell, 'A Set of Six Old Airs', *Rymour*, 1 (1906–1911), 61–66 (p. 61).

⁷⁴ University of Aberdeen, MS 3088/22, 'Folk-Song', pp. 47–48.

Appendix 1 Tunes Riddell collected

'No.' refers to Riddell's number in 'Old Airs' (book 2 begins at tune 85); *Rymour* refers to volume and page number in the *Miscellanea of the Rymour Club* (see note 8).

No.	Title	GD number	<i>Rymour</i>
1	The Foggy Dew	1495H	2.62
2	Pretty Peggy	1490H	2.63
3	Bold Brannen On The Muir	258C	
4	The Gloamin' Star	880Ca	
5	The Rigs o' Rye	1054J	
6	Lang Johnnie Moir	246C	
7	The Wee Fisherman Boy	961F	2.36
8	A Sailor and his True Love	64I	2.189
9	When the Wars Are All O'er	1742	
10	He Wadna Lie In Barn	274F	
11	Mossy An's Mear	677C	
12	Home Dearie Home	1057F	2.188
13	Rolling in the Dew mak's the Milkmaids fair	812A	
14	In Forglen you know	1547L	
15	Plains o' Waterloo	152F	
16	Once more for Greenland we are bound	10L	
17	Dowie Dens o' Yarrow (first set)	215G	
18	Dowie Dens o' Yarrow (second set)	215Y	
19	Two Brothers in the Army	1056F	
20	There cam' a laddie frae the North	975C	
21	Glasgow Peggy	850H	
22	The Braes o' Balquhither	862B	
23	Barley Rigs Were Rakin'	1154F	
24	Three years a 'Prentice	54F	
25	The Beggar Man	274F	
26	Cross the Raging Sea	1741	
27	The Auld Gair'ner's Wife	1262H	
28	To the beggin' I will go	488H	
29	I will put my ship in order	792La	
30	The fish may fly and the seas gang dry	1541F	
31	Frae the Seatown to the Newtown	463E	
32	Tell me dear lassie th' wye for to woo	909	
33	I mean to tak' a man	1333H (Addenda)	
34	Jean Findlater's Loon	662	
35	Davie an' his kye thegither	1281D	
36	Farewell my dearest Polly	998F	
37	The Laird o' Drum	835J	
38	Young Allan	326J	
39	The Ploughboy	170G	

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No.	Title	GD number	Rymour
40	Erin-go-Bragh	236D	
41	The Ploo, or Sally Monroe	448B	
42	Gweed Ale Comes	593B	
43	In Forfar I was born and bred	69K	
44	Josey Watt	1426B	
45	Patie cam' doun the Glen	616C	
46	Oh, Gin My Bonnie Babe was Born	1169E	
47	The Banks of Inverurie	1263C	
48	Come O'er fae Pitgair	401E	
49	Bonnie Hoose o' Airlie	233D	
50	Oh hey, and waes me	979D	
51	The Plains of America	1469F	
52	The Wee Toon-Clerk	317K	
53	Oh mak' my Bed Easy	209C	
54	Whistling at the Ploo	922	
55	The Trooper and Fair Maid	1470A	
56	For You my Johnnie Lad	755E	
57	Donald Blue	581J	
58	Colonel Hay	75C	2.191
59	Duke Willie	1763A	2.190
60	The Lass o' Glenshee	953G	
61	Supple Sandy	1712	
62	Drumdelgie	384J	2.192
63	I kissed my love wi' his apron on	471D	
64	Hey Jenny, come down to Jock	1737	
65	Rigs o' Rye (2nd version)		1.62
66	If she will gang wi' ye, she will gang bare		1.63
67	Donald and his Lowland Bride		1.63
68	Bonnie Buchanhaven, or The New-Tarr'd Yoll		1.64
69	Irish Mally, O		1.65
70	Oh, Laddie are ye waiting yer fortune to advance?		1.65
71	Come all ye Freemasons where'er ye be		1.119
72	Kind Johnnie Jiggamy	1412B	
73	In Forfar I was born and bred (or The Forfar Spout) (second set)	69G	
74	I will put my ship in order (second set)	792Lb	2.63
75	Cauld blaws the wind o'er the high Rocks o' Pennan	1121E	
76	Bonnie Mary Jamieson		1.117
77	The High Rocks o' Pennan (note states 'Twice written by mistake')		
78	The Band o' Shearers		1.118
79	The Braes o' Strathdon		1.116

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No.	Title	GD number	Rymour
80	The Ball o' Kirriemuir – and many others		
81	Fortune turns the Wheel		
82	The Bonnie Banks o' Ugie, O	1314E	
83	The Road to Peterhead	613A	
84	Mary the Maid o' the Don		
85	Donald of Glencoe		
86	O, Wha's for Scotland and Charlie?		
87	Maybe I'll be mairret yet		
88	Ratcliffe Highway		
89	The Lawyer's Bonnie Peggy		
	Fortune Turns the Wheel (note states 'Mistake, twice written')		
90	Mormond Braes		
91	Caledonia (1st version)		
92	Caledonia (2nd version)		
93	The Proud King of France		
94	Erin's Lovely Home		
95	Three Miles Below Langside		
96	Van Dieman's Land		
97	The Winnin o' my Goon		
98	Mossie And His Mare (2nd version)		
99	The Barnyards o' Delgaty		
100	Air Contributed by A. Murison, Roseheartly		
101	The Tinklers' Waddin'		
102	As Lang's My Apron Wis Hingin' Doon		
103	Old Highland Air		
104	Highland Lament		
105	Maybe I'll be mairret yet		
106	A' the Lads o' oor Toon		
107	Loch Lomond		
108	Ye Shall Be My Dearie		
		The Gloamin' Star at E'en 880Cb	
			To Gang Awa' A- wooin', 1.120
			A Nameless Air, 1.121
			When I am on the Sea Sailing, 2.37